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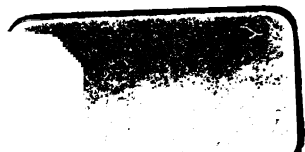
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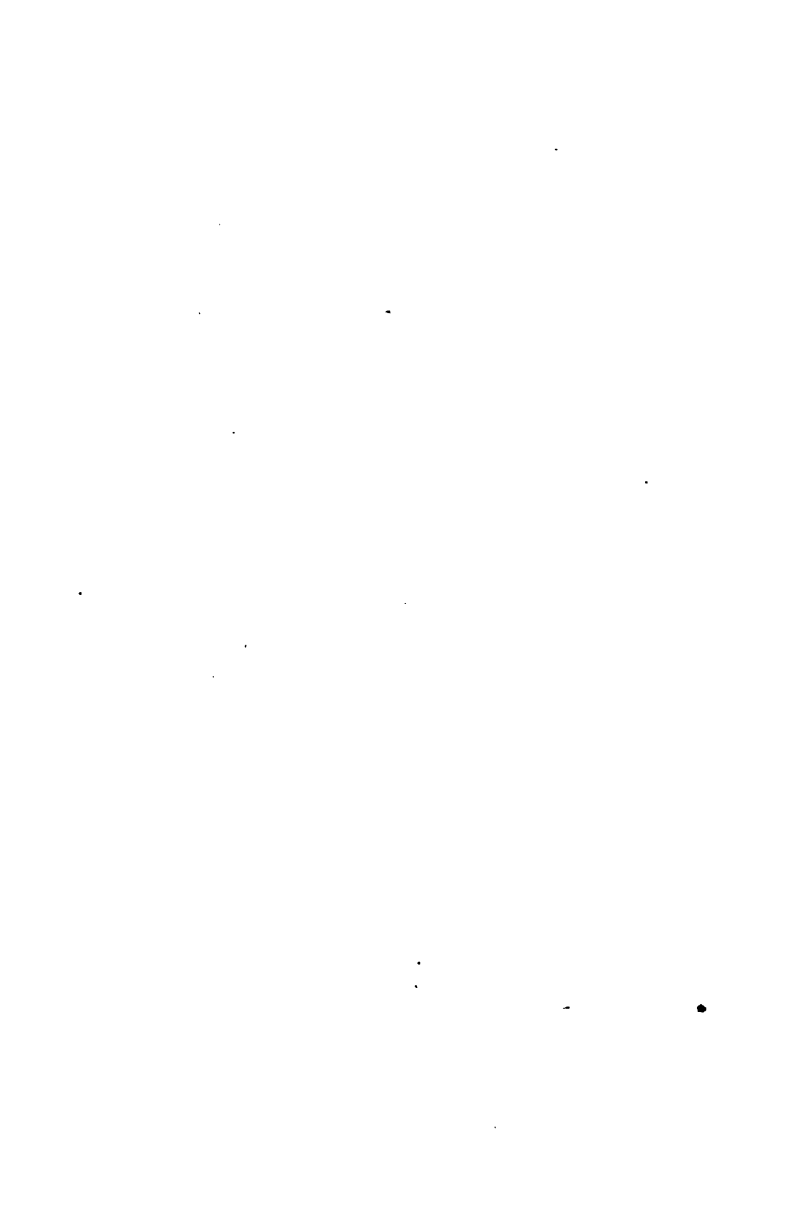


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THE
DIAMOND WREATH:

OR,

THE PRICE OF A SOUL.

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TO
THE FRIEND
WHO URGED THE PUBLICATION
OF THE FOLLOWING
TALE
IT IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED BY THE
AUTHOR;
IN THE HUMBLE TRUST THAT IT MAY ADD ONE SINGLE
RAY TO THE FLOOD OF GOLDEN SUNSHINE BY
WHICH THE CHRISTIAN LITERATURE
OF OUR DAY IS ENLIGHTENING
AND GLADDENING OUR
BELOVED LAND.

THE DIAMOND WREATH:

OR,

THE PRICE OF A SOUL.

CHAPTER I.

'Now mighty Nature bounds as from her birth,
The sun is in the heavens, and life on earth,
Flowers in the valley, splendour in the beam,
Health on the gale, and freshness in the stream.'

ONE beautiful morning in September, while the dew still sparkled on the lawn, and the air was cool and fresh, the Hall carriage swept out at the lodge gates. Seated in the carriage were three ladies, two of whom were of noble and elegant appearance, while the third was common-place and in no way prepossessing in air or manners. The neat, clean woman who stood at the lodge door ready to close the gates when the carriage should have passed out, dropped a low curtsy, but it called forth from the aristocratic-looking ladies no kind word or smile of recognition.

As Bridget re-entered her cottage she could

not help remarking to her husband, 'Weel, John, I'm no prophet, but Miss Caroline looks rale unweel an' melancholy like, an' her leddyship, an' that dour little bodie Miss Brimale, were sae busy attendin' to her, that they ne'er sae much as lookit my gait. Miss Brimale is nae wise improved; she aye pits me in mind o' a winter's day, for she's short, dark, and dirty. What her leddyship sees *there* to improve Miss Caroline, I know not; and eh! since me, what a different young leddy Miss Hume is to my ain sweet Miss Meredith! *She* wud hae been down to the lodge the day after her return frae Lon'on, or ony o' these great pairts, to speir for me, an' faither, an' a'. But the Hall folks is no like the Castle nobility, and indeed it wudna be easy for them.'

'Weel, Bridget,' said John, 'I'm sure if Miss Meredith heard you misca'in' Miss Hume she wud be sorry indeed, for you mind she used aye to say that we should never speak o' our neibors, unless we had something guid to say o' them—and Miss Brim—'

'Dinna name her, John, for see, I canna bide her vinegar face, an' that twinkle, twinkle o' her grey een is unco fearsome-like to my way o' thinkin'.' So saying, Bridget walked out into the garden, where, to use her own words, she 'took a bit spring to herself'—viz., indulged in the luxury of a few tears—over the 'light and joy of other days.'

It was quite true that Caroline Hume looked ill and depressed, and her mother and Miss Brunelle, who accompanied her in the carriage, had anxious fears regarding her. Yet there was no real cause for alarm as to her bodily health: her depression and listlessness owed their origin to a different source; and fond and proud as Lady Hume was of her daughter, she persisted in following her own course of remedy, although each new trial was succeeded by fresh disappointment.

Caroline Hume was the only child of Sir Richard and Lady Hume of Ashley Hall. To a superficial and worldly observer, her lot appeared to be one of unusual brilliancy, unshaded by a single passing cloud. Such is often the estimate formed by many of one seemingly raised far above them in temporal prosperity; but a closer inspection too often serves to withdraw the veil which conceals some sorrow,—some peculiarity of grief, the bitterness of which the aching heart alone knows. All that wealth could concentrate had been heaped upon the idolized Caroline by her fond parents, and from her earliest years she had known no wish ungratified. It would have been no cause of surprise had the indulged child grown up a spoilt and discontented girl; but such was not the case. A sound judgment, with much good sense and great sweetness of disposition, preserved her from the ruinous effects of such injudicious, and, in many cases, fatal training.

In her earlier years her education was conducted at home by English and foreign governesses of the highest accomplishment, and subsequently at a fashionable boarding-school in London. Besides these advantages of education which she possessed, and of which her naturally intellectual mind availed itself in no ordinary way, she had great personal attractions. Her figure, though not strictly speaking tall, was much above the common height, and exquisitely moulded. Her classically formed head sat upon a neck that might have graced a queen, while her beautiful features glowed with animation and playful vivacity. Her dark blue eyes reflected in their clearness the thoughts and feelings of her heart, and the shame of falsehood never dimmed their brightness, nor caused the flush to mount to her fair cheek. Her rich, wavy, black hair was generally enclosed in a net of fanciful and costly workmanship, except when compelled to suffer her maid to elaborate on its behalf. Such was Caroline Hume, when, on her final arrival at home from school, she was introduced into society about a year previous to the commencement of our narrative.

‘ I saw thee in thy beauty—
Thou wert graceful as the fawn,
When, in very wantonness of glee,
It sports upon the lawn.’

It was not, then, to be wondered at, that her parents, and those of her friends whose thoughts

and desires rose not above the present life, should look upon the beautiful girl and fail to see any imperfection. Her high impetuosity of temper they called warmth and earnestness, and indeed, exhibited as it was in the unrestrained outgoings of her loving heart to them all, they could not wish it checked. Her intense love of being loved, and of admiration in its many ways and forms, increased with the amount of both which she received, but her ingenuousness, which remained untarnished, threw a charm and fascination around her. In man's eyes she was lovely—what was she in God's sight? for that which we are in God's sight, that we are, and nothing more. Pause, dear reader, and think on this solemn aspect, ere we pass on to the events of her brief young life. It is with God we have to do, and 'He looketh upon the heart. He judgeth not as man does. His thoughts are not as man's thoughts.' God is no respecter of persons. He says to each and all of His creatures, 'Give Me thine heart;' and it is only as this demand is responded to or rejected, that the life is a happy, or a cheerless, aimless one. Is this in very deed the truth? and yet we see thousands of our race crowding round the alluring vanities of this world? It is even so: the immortal spirit strives to quench its cravings by drinking from earth's turbid streams, madly turning away from the pure River of Life, of which, and of which alone, if a man drink, he

shall never thirst again. When such is man's course, need we wonder at the discontent and disappointment which follow in his track, infusing their poison into the best of earth's joys? Truly has the Christian poet said—

‘ The joy that vain amusements give,
Oh! sad conclusion that it brings:
The honey of a crowded hive
Defended by a thousand stings.’

And every candid mind will confess that, after the trial of the world's best pleasures, his heart still craves for something better, and echoes the cry of the wise man of old, ‘Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.’

But we linger not now on this subject, so full of interest, trusting that the passages in the history of Caroline Hume, which we now offer to the reader, may, by the individual experience of one whose life was so replete with temporal prosperity, but so unsanctified by God's grace, and, therefore, so unsatisfying, teach a saving lesson.

Leaving our party to pursue their drive, in which we shall ere long overtake them, and poor Bridget to weep over her unsympathizing flower-beds the tear of wounded feeling, we ask the reader, in order that he may the better understand the sequel, to go back with us to some of the events of the preceding year, beginning with Caroline's final arrival at home from school.

CHAPTER II.

'A lovely being, scarcely form'd or moulded;
A rose, with all its sweetest leaves yet folded.'

It was a fine afternoon towards the middle of December, when Sir Richard Hume drove up to the railway station at L——.

Alighting from the carriage, he gave special orders to Elphinstone to have the hot water bottles replenished; and, proceeding to the platform, awaited the arrival of the train. The Baronet had come to meet his daughter, and soon afterwards the train arrived, and he had the extreme satisfaction of receiving her safe and well, accompanied by the lady at whose school she had been, and a young friend, who was invited to spend part of her holidays at Ashley Hall. Springing from the carriage where she was, her beautiful face sparkling with delight at again seeing her father, the young girl bounded into his arms, and then turned to introduce to him Mrs Ford and Miss Cracklow. They were soon all comfortably seated in the carriage, and driving to the Hall. The snow fell heavily and noiselessly on the ground, and all nature was clothed in her spotless robes. Caroline had much to hear, and many questions to ask Sir Richard, for it

it was two years since she had been at home. In answer to her inquiries, she learnt that most of the expected visitors who were to form their Christmas party, had already arrived at the Hall, and that gay doings were in prospect. Having heard the names of the various guests, Caroline exclaimed eagerly, 'And Rose, papa, you have not mentioned her. Is she not over? I particularly asked mamma to beg her to be at home on my arrival, for it seems so very long since we have seen each other. I can hardly wait even for a day.' 'She has not come yet,' said her father, 'but no doubt she will be coming for the ball,—your ball, Carry, next week.' 'Oh, of course she will,' replied Caroline impatiently, 'but I did so long to see her; however, we can ride over to Castle Meredith to-morrow, eh, papa?' 'We shall see,' replied Sir Richard, 'but I fear this snow will make the roads nearly impassable on horseback.' 'Oh no, no—we must go, or if we can't ride, I would rather walk all the eight miles to the Castle.' And having thus, as she thought, settled the matter, Caroline turned to point out to her friends the different places of interest as they passed along. 'That,' she said, pointing to a fine avenue they were passing, 'is Lady Violet Grey's approach, and that pretty lodge on the other side of the road is the entrance to Lord Eccles' princely place, and now we are only three miles from home.'

It was nearly dark by the time the carriage

swept down the long approach to the Hall, and many lights gleamed cheerfully from the windows of the fine old mansion. A few minutes afterwards, and Caroline was folded in her mother's arms, who, with her assembled guests, stood at the door to welcome the travellers. Mrs Ford and Miss Cracklow were also welcomed with all politeness by the aristocratic-looking Lady Hume, and soon afterwards retired to their own apartments, to arrange their toilette before dinner.

'Mamma,' said Caroline, as her ladyship followed her daughter to her room, and lingered talking to her, 'why is Rose not here? You know I would rather have had her than any one else.' 'She declined the invitation I sent her,' said Lady Hume, with dignity. 'Did you tell her I should be home to-night? for when I last wrote to her, I was uncertain whether or not I should come direct home.' 'Yes, I particularly mentioned it.' 'What is her reason, then?' asked Caroline with much concern; 'I know she longs to see me as much as I do her. But she will be coming to the ball on Thursday at any rate,' she added, her face again lighting up, 'and then she must spend a long time with us.' 'No,' again said Lady Hume coldly and haughtily, 'she is not coming; she —' 'What is the meaning of all this, mamma?' interrupted Caroline impetuously; 'I do hope you and Mrs Meredith have not quarrelled again, and that Rose and I shall

be parted, as we have so often been.' 'Be calm, Caroline,' said her mother, in a freezing tone, 'I have not Rose's note, but she said she could not accept an invitation to a ball.' Caroline looked puzzled, but did not speak, and Lady Hume left the room.

She had purposely kept back from her daughter the fact that she had sent Rose no invitation to come and welcome her friend home, but merely a formal card of invitation to the ball, which was to be given in honour of Caroline's first entrance into society; and she withheld also that the reply sent by Rose was kind and affectionate to the mother of her whom she so deeply and ardently loved, although her refusal to be present at the gay entertainment was firm and decided. Caroline, left alone, stood looking dreamily into the fire, as it blazed and sparkled merrily. What was the meaning of her friend's absence? why was she not here?—here, sharing with her this very room, where they had spent many happy hours together? A suspicion of change crossed her mind, but was instantly rebuked. No, no,—every other friend and companion might fail, but Rose—it was simply impossible; and Caroline would not harbour the painful possibility for a single moment. Lifting her eyes, she glanced round the room;—it was superb and elegant,—every article of furniture was choice and tasteful. In one corner stood the

pretty French bed, with its simple hangings,—in another, the dressing table, with its white drapery; upon it were costly toilette ornaments, and some beautiful green-house flowers. The soft window curtains were closed, and the bright fire and wax candles threw a delicious light through the apartment. The luxuriant couch, and tempting-looking low chairs, were most inviting; and an elegant book-case, filled with the works of Caroline's favourite authors, suggested enjoyment, both of pleasure and profit, for her leisure hours. Every wish had been anticipated, and nothing seemed forgotten. As Caroline threw herself into her favourite little chair, her eyes filled with tears, as they fell on another quite similar; it was called 'Rose's Chair.' Now Rose was not here to occupy it. Wearied and disappointed, Caroline leant her head on the soft cushion, and presently fell fast asleep. She dreamt she was climbing a rocky precipice, and pressing to its summit. Eager and impetuous, she screamed with delight at the noble prospect which lay at her feet. Then she fancied there were many around her, bending low to her, and obeying her every wish; but, looking anxiously around the crowd, she missed one. It was Rose, without whose presence to share the joy, it was but half complete; and in her determined haste to descend and search for her friend, she awoke.

The company assembled at the Hall was a

brilliant one, as regarded wit and wealth, and beauty and fashion ; yet, as Caroline moved about in the unconscious ease of high breeding, and the happy freedom of being now at home, her beauty admitted of no compeer. The morning after her arrival, Caroline proposed to her papa that a riding party should be made to Castle Meredith ; but, to her great disappointment, heard that the intense frost had rendered the road so slippery, that, to say the least, the ride would be unpleasant, and not very safe. Caroline could only hope that the next day would prove a thaw ; but again her hopes were frustrated, and the frost and drifting snow continued uninterruptedly. Thus the days passed on, and the important evening of the ball drew near. To those of our young readers who are unacquainted with such matters, we may mention that the *debut* of a young lady of high rank is looked upon by herself and her friends as a very eventful era in her life. She then bids a final adieu to school and school days, and crosses the margin which had hitherto secluded her within the private retirement of the schoolroom and the jurisdiction of a governess. Caroline looked forward to the event with characteristically intense expectation, for it had been long held up to her imagination as the entrance into all but unmingled bliss.

It was, then, with no small degree of excitement, that, on the eventful evening, Caroline and

the party already assembled at the Hall separated after dinner, to prepare for the great occasion.

Seating herself in a chair near the fire, Caroline put herself into her maid's hands, who, after a somewhat elaborate performance upon the rich tresses of Caroline's hair, pronounced it a perfect masterpiece. Then the beautiful dress was put on ; and as she stood opposite the mirror, and one ornament after another was added, and one finishing touch succeeded another, could it have spoken, it would have said that a form so graceful, or a face so fair, had never before been reflected on its smooth surface. Ere Caroline quitted her apartment, Lady Hume entered the room, carrying in her hand a bouquet of the rarest greenhouse flowers. 'Here, Caroline,' she said, 'is a present sent you by Lord Ulick ; and, in a note I have from him, he says he hopes you will make him happy, by wearing them this evening.' 'Stupid old man,' involuntarily flew from Caroline's lips, as she burst into a fit of laughing, 'does he imagine I shall wear his dingy, grim old passion-flowers, when papa took all the trouble to go to the greenhouse himself for *these*,' holding up some exquisite camellias and heaths, which she arranged as she spoke. 'Nay, nay, at the risk of the prosy old lord spending a miserable night of which, by the way, I have no manner of apprehension, I must decline the honour.' Lady Hume looked mortified, but as there was no time

to discuss the subject, Caroline carried her point. It was with a beating heart that the lovely girl, leaning on her father's arm, entered the brilliant drawing-room. The scene was glittering ; lights and music, and flowers and fashion, combining to fascinate, and almost for a moment delude the mind into the belief of the lie,—that this was happiness. The adulation and admiration which this her first appearance elicited, were well fitted to turn the head of many wiser than Caroline. A hum of admiration passed through the rooms as she flitted along. Yet was it unalloyed ? Ah, no ; for whoever was by her side, and to whomsoever she listened, she never forgot that Rose was not there to sympathize in her triumph and share its honours and pleasures.

Later in the evening, as Caroline was very impatiently listening to some flattering speech of Lord Ulick, she suddenly darted from him, and, hastening to the door, welcomed an elderly lady who had just then entered. Seating herself beside her, she abruptly said, ‘Mrs Graham, why is not Rose here to-night ? Why has she not come to see me ?’ ‘Oh,’ replied the lady, ‘are you not aware that she has withdrawn from society ? You must not expect to see her in the world, Miss Hume.’ Caroline looked puzzled, and then said, ‘I don’t understand what you and mamma mean about Rose. I saw her in London last spring, when she was visiting Lady Stanley, and spent some

pleasant evenings with them.' 'Ah,' replied Mrs Graham mysteriously, 'but these would be nice, quiet, sober affairs. Rose will go to these, but she is too good to go to such a—to balls, or worldly parties.' 'Too good,' said Caroline, 'did she say that?' 'Oh, well, if she did not say it in so many words, she acts it by staying away from them.' 'I wish she had been here to-night at any rate,' said Caroline sighingly, 'for there is not one in the room to compare to her, besides being my own beloved Rose.' Cold and worldly as Mrs Graham was, and hating, as she did, the principles which actuated her niece, Rose Meredith, she could not but feel gratified by the ardent way in which Caroline spoke of her friend. 'Rose again,' said Emma Cracklow sneeringly, who, unperceived by Caroline, had overheard her concluding remarks, 'I should really like to see that girl.'

'I wish you could,' retorted Caroline significantly, who began to grow more and more weary of Miss Cracklow's society; then, thinking herself unkind, she turned to Emma, and changed the conversation.

'Who is that handsome young man coming into the room?' inquired Emma. Caroline looked in the direction named. 'I do not know,' she began carelessly; then, her whole face kindling with pleasure, she added, 'Yes, it surely is, I am sure it is Edward.' 'Edward who?' said Emma; but Caroline was gone—some one had come to

lead her away to dance, and the sentence remained unfinished. The so-called 'Edward' had been hurried away by Lady Hume to another drawing-room, and, having introduced him to a partner, she fondly hoped she had, for the time at least, secured her purpose of preventing her daughter seeing or recognising the young man. At the close of the dance, however, Caroline, having watched his disappearance, proposed to her partner that they should go into the other room. Thither they went, and ere long they came near to where Edward was. Caroline moved along ; the young man's eyes fell upon her, and, fascinated with the beautiful girl's appearance, he was just going to ask some one near him who she was, when he heard her say, 'Edward, do you not know me ? How is Rose, dear, dear Rose,' at the same time extending her hand to him, while she shook his warmly. 'Miss Hume,' he began, 'it is so long since we have met ; but,' he added warmly, 'now I do recognise the Caroline of our childish days, although you are so greatly changed.' 'For the better I hope, however,' said Caroline playfully, thus restoring the young man to ease and self-possession ; and, as he offered her his arm, they passed into a quieter apartment. Edward Meredith was Rose's second brother, and, although several years older than his sister, had been the playmate and protector of her and Caroline in their childhood's days. He had, however, left some years previously for India, and

had only returned a few months since to his native country. Caroline knew, of course, of his arrival, and sympathized in her friend's joy at the event, but was not aware that he had been invited to the Hall that evening. Lady Hume, finding that Sir Richard insisted upon the young man being invited, had concealed this also from Caroline; indulging the hope that she might fail to recognise him, and that, amid the attention which would be universally paid her, Edward might fail of renewing his acquaintance with his former playmate. In all this, however, she was disappointed; and, as the two young people talked of their former days and happy associations, the long interval of separation seemed easily spanned, and their old acquaintanceship soon stood on its former footing.

'And now,' said Caroline, as they seated themselves on a sofa, 'tell me all about Rose, why she has not come over long ago to see me, and why she is not here to-night.'

'She was only invited for this evening,' replied Edward, 'and Lady Hume mentioned in her note, that, as you would have a large party staying in the house to attend to, she thought it would be better that Rose should postpone paying her visit, and that afterwards you would be more able to enjoy one another's society. She also said you would write to Rose on your arrival at home, and, poor girl, she has been pining for your letter, as anxiously as we in India do for

the arrival of the home mails.' Caroline turned pale with emotion at this recital, and then said, 'Mamma never told me a word of all this, Edward, how strange Rose must have thought my conduct—how cold—how unfeeling.' Thus she was going on in an impassioned way, when Edward interrupted her by saying, 'Strange, but nothing more,—*nothing*, Caroline; and you know we had such interruptions to our intercourse in former days.' 'Ah! yes,' said Caroline, 'but why did not Rose come to-night?' Edward was going to reply, when Lady Hume swept into the room, leaning on Lord Ulick's arm, and exclaimed in a tone of voice, which politeness alone saved from being harsh, 'Why, Caroline, you here, when every one is looking for you. I am surprised at you. You have forgotten your engagement to Lord Ulick.' 'Oh, I don't wish to dance any more, at present at least,' said Caroline; but her mother, disengaging her arm from that of the old lord, gracefully slipped it within Edward's, and led him away into the gay throng. Caroline felt all the inclination to rebel, yet could scarcely help smiling at the adroitness of her mother; however, consoling herself with the thought of the satisfactory conversation she had had with Edward, she suffered herself to be again led to the dance.

We stay not to dwell further on the scenes of this eventful evening, but conclude by saying, that at a very late hour the distinguished visitors

who were to leave, took their departure; and Lady Hume's vanity was abundantly gratified by the brilliant success of her entertainment, and the undisguised and supreme admiration which had been universally lavished upon her lovely and charming daughter. When all the guests had retired to rest, Caroline repaired to Miss Cracklow's room, where, sitting by the fire, the two girls talked over the night's events. Then Caroline bade her friend 'good night,' and going to her own room found her maid waiting to lend her assistance.

'How tired you look, Miss Hume!' said Ainslie, as she removed the glittering ornaments one by one. 'Do I?' said Caroline; 'I don't feel so—I'm sure I shan't sleep—I wonder how people do, who go to balls every night. They say it is very delightful, but I really don't think so.' 'Oh, Miss, to be so much admired and made of as you,' interrupted Ainslie eagerly, 'it must be charming.' 'Well, I daresay it is,' said Caroline, in a dreamy tone of voice, that told her thoughts were far away. 'I shall not detain you longer, Ainslie; you must be very sleepy; thank you,—now, good night.'

Caroline was much too excited to be able to sleep, and she walked up and down her room, the burden of her reflections being, as she thought over the past hours, 'Is this all? Can this be all?' What would the many have thought, whose

hearts had that night swelled with envious feelings towards the beautiful Caroline, could they have heard these words fall from her lips? She felt truly that the great event had come far short of the anticipation, and she could only console herself with the hope that the next gay ball or party would prove more satisfying to her, at present, disappointed hopes. She at last lay down and slept for a short time, and, on awaking, rose hastily and dressed, without waiting for the usual attendance of her maid. Having finished dressing, she proceeded down stairs. It was nine o'clock, yet there were no signs of life in the house. Opening the drawing-room door, she unclosed the shutters, and almost started at the scene which met her eyes. Could these be the same rooms which, but a few hours since, had looked so brilliant? Nothing was touched. All was as it had been left; yet all seemed changed. The pale beams of the winter morning's sun shed a sickly light over the gay apartments, and the snowy robe of nature outside, contrasted strangely with the dim glare of all within. The beautiful flowers, which, arranged in garlands and festoons, and profusely scattered throughout the rooms, had looked so fresh and lovely, now drooped and hung their fading heads—fit emblem of the fleeting nature of the scene they had adorned. The ottomans and couches were soiled and crushed, and their delicate tints, to Caroline's distorted

eye, looked almost sickly and faded ; while from the innumerable costly ornaments, which she had so greatly admired, she now moved almost loathingly away. Even her harp, to which she turned as to a sympathetic friend, looked languid and sad, and she spied several broken strings hang helplessly and provokingly down.

‘How different these rooms look,’ she involuntarily exclaimed, ‘and how very soon things change ! It makes me quite sick to stay here. I wonder that I could have admired them so much last night.’ She quitted the scene, shivering and disgusted, and again returned to her own apartment, not without an impression having been made upon her mind, which she did not soon forget of the shortlived nature of the gayest scenes, and of the necessity for the delusive attractions of light and glitter to furnish the needful excitement for entering into the spirit of such scenes. Yes, it is the jaundiced eye, that has lost its relish for life’s purer and more sacred pleasures, that can alone extract a temporary joy from the excitement and glare of earth’s artificial illuminations.

The reader must have concluded that, for reasons with which he is as yet unacquainted, there was no very friendly intercourse between the elder members of the family at the Hall and those of Castle Meredith ; and we think it is now time to explain the circumstances of the case. From the traits of Lady Hume’s character which

have already been exhibited, it will excite no surprise that she shrank from cultivating the society of those who lived for a better life than the fleeting present, and whose Christian principles were so very decided and consistent, that they were shunned and hated by that world which she so coveted and loved. Of such decided principles was the family at Meredith Castle. As burning lights set upon an hill, they shone out bright and clear in the midst of the surrounding darkness. Of equally aristocratic standing with the family at the Hall, Mr and Mrs Meredith soon discovered, on their first coming to reside in the neighbourhood, that they could never be on any other terms with their worldly neighbours than those of polite but distant acquaintanceship. The openly avowed hostility of Lady Hume to the pure Christianity they loved, and by whose principles their life was ruled, was too inveterate to admit of more than the exchange of rare civilities, Sir Richard, however, had political reasons of his own for not choosing to cease all intercourse. Besides, as Caroline grew old enough to wish for a companion, and having no brothers or sisters of her own, by a strange, yet by no means uncommon caprice of humanity, she and the young members of Castle Meredith imbibed a strong attachment for one another, and the love between herself and Rose became mutual and ardent. Accustomed as Caroline was, when a child, to have every

wish indulged, it was not then difficult for her to prevail upon her parents to permit her to visit her friend, and also to receive Rose as an occasional inmate of the Hall. Caroline's visits, however, at the Castle were much the more numerous, for, while Mrs Meredith rejoiced to have the interesting girl under her roof, she shrank from allowing Rose to imbibe the worldly atmosphere of the Hall. Thus Caroline became not only the beloved friend of Rose, but also intimately acquainted with all the other members of her family; and it will be seen what opportunities the girls had for increasing their friendship, without the cordiality between their parents being at all augmented. A change in the frequency of their seeing one another occurred, however, at the time Caroline left home for school. They met, it is true, during the summer holidays, but Caroline generally spent the Christmas vacation with English friends; and thus, although the intervals served but to enhance the rapture with which the two girls met, there were necessarily many changes of thought and sentiment taking place, which, although mentioned in the letters they exchanged, could not be thoroughly or satisfactorily detailed.

The chief and most interesting event which took place during Caroline's absence was the death of Kate Meredith, the eldest daughter of the family, and to whom Caroline was warmly attached. Deeply did she sympathize in the loss

sustained by her friend Rose, and strove with touching sweetness to supply the blank in her young heart.

Lady Hume, who had hitherto consented to the intimacy which existed between her daughter and Rose Meredith, and who looked upon it as mere childish love, was now, however, resolved to put a determined check upon it. This resolution was formed mainly in consequence of the development, in Rose, of the same gracious principles which so strongly characterized her parents.

‘It was all very well,’ her Ladyship said to Sir Richard, while speaking to him on the subject, when Caroline was about to return finally from school, ‘to allow her to have such a nice lively companion as Rose, when she was like any other high-born girl; but, now that she had embraced the fanatical opinions of her father and mother, she should take special care that her daughter was kept aloof from society so foreign to her own taste and desires.

Besides possessing these hostile sentiments towards vital godliness, Lady Hume’s ambition knew no limits to its aspirations for Caroline; and she resolved to accomplish her aims, at whatever might be the expense to her child of the heart’s best and noblest feelings, vainly imagining that, in thus acting, she was consulting and contriving the ultimate happiness of her whom she so truly loved.

Strong as was Caroline's will, it was yet weak compared with that of her mother's; and, in all the ingenuousness of a confiding heart, she knew not to what degradation a mind will stoop for the accomplishment of those aims, to attain which, it must swerve from the path of uprightness and truth.

Lady Hume's anxiety, as well as her resentment, had been raised by the disappointment of her hopes, on the evening of the ball, when she had found Caroline and Edward Meredith in all the renewed enjoyment of their former happy friendship, and actually forsaking the attractions and triumph of the ball-room for the quiet retreat of a less public apartment. A second son!—a poor soldier! What presumption on his part! what madness on the part of Caroline! This foolish fancy must be crushed in the very bud!

The supposed discovery of such thoughts and designs in the Meredith family, tended to widen the breach and lessen the intercourse which had existed between the two families; and, after the first morning visit had been paid by Caroline on her return home to her friend, Lady Hume forbade any intercourse of a more lengthened kind. Caroline's high spirit rose in rebellion at such treatment; but when, to her surprise, she found that her will was thwarted and opposed, without any hope of change, she, in the pride and vexa-

tion of a forced submission, rushed in reckless excitement into the very vortex of gay and fashionable life. In this pursuit she had abundant gratification, as soon after her introduction into society, she accompanied Sir Richard and Lady Hume to spend a short time in Bath, and Lady Hume's wishes for the separation of the friends were thus successfully realized.

CHAPTER III.

‘ONE THING IS NEEDFUL.’

- ‘Ah! the heart that has forsaken
All things to secure the one,
In the secret of its chambers
Finds the joys of heaven begun.
- ‘Ah! the heart that is contented
Nought to know save God alone,
In the fulness of His blessing,
Finds a peace before unknown.
- ‘Ah! the heart that once has bathed
In Salvation’s boundless sea,
In its waters drops the burden
Of a lifetime’s misery.
- ‘Ah! the heart that lives dissevered
From the vain delights of time,
By a peaceful path is treading
Through this vale of tears and crime.
- ‘Oh! that thus we would surrender
Worldly pride, and pomp, and show;
Seeking Him, in whom is centred
All the good that man can know.
- ‘Oh! that thus His blessed presence
In our hearts we here enjoyed;
For without Him all is dreary,
Earth is vain, and dark, and void.
- ‘Oh! that thus our eyes were turned
Evermore to Christ the King,
Until conscience lose its burden,
Life its load, and death its sting.

'Oh! Thou Fount of every blessing,
Draw us by Thy Cross, till we,
Heart, and soul, and will, and spirit,
Are for ever one with Thee.'

—*From the German.*

WE stay not to speak of the life led by Caroline, —of its frivolity and dissatisfaction; neither shall we pause to speak of her unchanged love for Rose, and her intense longing to be reunited to her friend; but, leaving these to develop themselves in our subsequent pages, we pass on to the sweet spring season, which, as it rapidly advanced, disclosed

'The long expected flowers,
And waked the purple year;
The attic warbler pours her throat,
Responsive to the cuckoo's note,
The untaught harmony of spring;
While, whispering pleasure as they fly,
Cool zephyrs through the clear blue sky
Their gather'd fragrance fling.'

Many who had left their country homes during the colder months, to spend some part of the winter in town residences, now gladly hastened to exchange the glare and dust of streets and squares, for the fresh verdure and delicious quiet of woods, and fields, and hills. Among these was the family of Ashley Hall; and very soon after their return home, an unexpected meeting took place between the two friends. They met

at the house of a mutual friend one forenoon, and Caroline's heart beat with a deeper, purer joy, than it had known for long. Rose's dark eyes glistened with tears, as they once again fell on the form of her friend, and the warm pressure of their hands told the unchanged love of their young hearts. If Rose joined enthusiastically in the feeling of admiration so universally entertained towards Caroline, she failed not also to remark an air of weariness and dissatisfaction in her features and expression, which saddened and grieved her. Luncheon being over, the party repaired to the drawing-room, where the lady of the house begged some music, and the piano and harp were soon in requisition. Rose had great talent and taste as a musician, and performed brilliantly on both instruments. On this occasion she delighted her audience, and charmed even the fastidious taste of Lady Hume, who, in the warmth of her admiration, remarked how pleasant it would be if she and Caroline played duets together. Conversation on the subject ensued, which ended in Mrs Meredith inviting Caroline to spend a few days at the Castle, and in Lady Hume—having ascertained that Edward was from home—graciously agreeing to the proposal. Caroline could scarcely believe the reality of her joy, when consent was given; but all surprise was at an end, when the arrangement was made that she should accompany her friends that afternoon, having

subsequent engagements, which might interfere with her visit, if postponed. 'Ainslie will forward a box for you this evening or to-morrow morning, at the very latest,' said Lady Hume. 'Oh yes, thank you,' said Caroline, whose feelings were much too delightfully excited and surprised to allow of more than one passing thought upon her dress, 'she will know exactly what I shall want.'

'Is it a dream, too sweet to be real, and from which I shall awake to disappointment, as I have so often done?' exclaimed Caroline, as, the carriage having driven off, she threw herself into Rose's arms, and burst into a flood of happy tears.

'It is no dream, dearest Carry,' said Rose, as she clasped her weeping friend in her arms; 'but a glad reality, from the joy of which, I trust, there will be no awaking. We are once more together,' and the friends remained locked in one long, long embrace.

The presence of Mrs Meredith in the carriage was, for the moment, forgotten. The feelings of the friends had been long pent up, and the very unexpected reaction was almost overpowering.

'Pray, excuse me, dear Mrs Meredith,' said Caroline at last, as she raised her head and dashed away the still falling tears, 'but I could not help it, it seems almost too much joy.'

Mrs Meredith, who had been a deeply affected spectator of the very touching scene before her,

drew Caroline affectionately towards her, and tenderly kissed her burning cheek.'

'And now,' she exclaimed, after she had spoken soothing, loving words to the ardent girl, 'you must prepare yourself for a very rapturous reception from the young folks at home.'

'Oh yes, indeed,' said Rose, 'we shall be having a renewal of our old difficulty, as to how we shall escape away together.'

'Oh yes,' replied Caroline laughing, 'what fun we used to have hiding from the children. Do you remember Edward finding us one day in the heart of an unfinished hay-stack? How amused he was at us, for not having pushed away the ladder. He declared it was as good as a finger-post to tell where we were, even if our voices had not betrayed us. It was very curious how Edward always found out our hiding-place; but, indeed, it was not from him we ran away, for we liked him so much to talk to us. How very nice Edward is,' added Caroline musingly, 'so clever, and so superior to the present race of gentlemen,—don't you think so, Rose?'

'I do,' replied Rose, smiling; 'but I may be partial, you know.'

'So may I,' answered Caroline with unconscious naiveté; 'but surely, when two such judges entertain the same opinion, it must be a just one.'

Castle Meredith stood midway up the slope of

a considerable eminence, and commanded a rare and beautiful view of the rich vale beneath. At this season the scenery was particularly fine, and the woods and fields were clothed with verdure of yet untarnished freshness. The graceful willows by the river side dipped their long branches in the cool water, and the violets and forget-me-nots opened their sweet blue eyes, and drank in the pearly drops which fell from the waving leaves.

‘How lovely this place is!’ said Caroline, as she revelled in the scene through which they were driving; ‘and now here I am once again at Castle Meredith.’

‘Well, Rose,’ said Caroline to her friend, as, at the close of a cheerful, social evening, the two girls, having retired for the night, stood side by side, gazing out upon the quiet moonlight scene before them, ‘I am more than ever convinced of what I have long believed, that yours is the best and happiest home in all the world. And yet, how many I have heard bemoaning the seclusion and monotony of your life, and saying that they knew, if you could exercise your free will, you would mingle in the world, and not suffer yourself to be cooped up as you are.’

Rose smiled, as Caroline continued: ‘But really, when one compares the private life and ways of these compassionate croakers with yours, it seems to me they might divert their pity into some fitter channel.’

‘So I think, dear Caroline ; for, indeed, I would not willingly exchange with them for one single day.’

‘Well, you must tell me to-morrow your secret of being happy, Rose ; for, indeed,’ she added in a sadder tone, ‘I have never yet found it, and if there is one earthly being who can teach it to me, it is yourself alone.’

That night, as the silver moon rose higher in the heavens, and peeped in at the room where the young girls were, it saw one sleeping softly, and with a more tranquil expression on her lovely face than had been there for long ; while the other knelt in prayer—yes, fervent prayer for that friend now with her, that she might be blessed to her, and might be enabled to convey a knowledge of the spring of her peace and happiness to that loved one, so that she, too, might be led by the Spirit of all truth to forsake all, and to follow Jesus, whom to know is life everlasting.

At Castle Meredith, Caroline Hume found herself in the heart of a Christian family. Not only were the elder members of the household ardent followers of the Lord ; but Rose, who, in their early days, had been amiable and attractive, but unrenewed and far from God, was now an avowed and devoted follower of Christ. How different was the atmosphere here from that which she daily inhaled ; and the influence upon her heart was perceptibly felt. The Christianity of

her friends was indeed fitted to attract. She marked their daily consistent walk, and delighted in their sincerity and love towards herself. She compared such conduct with the hollow profession and affected interest of many with whom she had intercourse, and resolved, as we have before remarked, that she should have conversation with Rose upon what was to her a subject alike mysterious and interesting. Thus, as the friends strolled by the sweet river side, or climbed the neighbouring summits, the conversation never failed, by mutual consent, to turn on the subject of religion.

‘Rose,’ said Caroline one day, as they wandered through a beautiful meadow, and the former, with a light step and beaming face, seemed to bound over the soft grass, ‘how happy you seem,—you must tell me what makes you so glad-hearted.’

‘Why,’ replied Rose, looking up archly in her friend’s face, ‘have I not good reason to be joyous, with you again beside me? Many a time, as I have wandered by this river, my enjoyment has been sadly shaded by the remembrance that my loved companion, who used to gather rushes with me by its side, was not here, and I knew not when we might meet.’

‘Dear Rose, and how did you think of me?’

‘I thought of you as my little darling playmate—my own Carry—with whom my sweetest childhood’s days were indissolubly linked.’

‘But how did you think of me now? I mean since I have grown up, and come out, and all that.’

‘Oh,’ said Rose, as the tears glistened in her eyes, and her step relaxed, ‘I have thought sadly of you, as I heard of your vain and aimless life. You have been in my thoughts by day, and even in my dreams by night. Once I dreamt, but I need not recall it, although I wept at its recollection till my heart grew faint, and I prayed for you as for one in a sea of temptation.’

‘What was your dream? Do tell me,’ said Caroline eagerly.

Urged to recount what, in a moment of strong feeling, she had casually mentioned, Rose obeyed. ‘I dreamt that I saw playing on the bank of a stream a fairy-looking, lovely child. The bank was covered with wild flowers; and merrily she sang, as she plucked the gay flowers, and, flinging them into the water, watched them as they floated down. The music of her ringing laugh, mingled with the play of the water, was wafted on the light breeze. Suddenly her eye seemed fixed on some object more fascinating; and, looking in the direction where she gazed, I saw a pretty painted bubble, skimming the surface of the stream, and floating with the current. It glided near the spot where the child stood entranced; she stretched out her tiny hand to seize it, but it eluded her grasp. Stepping into the water, she again extended her hand, but again it flitted away. On-

ward and onward it moved, and still she followed, till the water reached to her waist. Oh ! was there no one to warn, and help, and drag back ? I saw no friend there. Eagerly she pursued the alluring tempter, till, with a spring, she clutched the rainbow-coloured ball ; and, as she clutched, the bubble burst,—and simultaneously she was hurried into the engulfing rapid. Just as her sweet face was disappearing, and the cry of anguish rose from her lips, I recognised, as I thought, the features of my early friend. I awoke, trembling and agitated ; and how thankful I was that it was but a dream. Still, I thought there was a lesson to be taught by the circumstance.'

'But you don't believe in dreams, Rose ?' asked Caroline.

'I don't believe that whatever I dream is to take place, nor the still more current superstition among the vulgar, that dreams are contrary ; but my feeling on the subject is, that we should bring dreams, as well as all other things, to the test of the Bible, and prove them by its inspired doctrine. Both of us, dear Carry, were at one time following as vain and shadowy an allurer as the painted bubble after which the child was flying,—I mean the world with its empty show. It matters not whether the pleasure be decked in the gaudy colours of gay and frivolous amusement, or in the more sober garb of lawful but unduly cherished gratification. It matters not, if the thing or

amusement come in between us and God : it is sin ; for whatever usurps the place in our hearts which God should have, that is the world to us. If, then, one of us is as yet engaged in the vain chase, oh, how does it become the other, who, by grace, has found a sure and tried foundation on which to rest her craving and immortal soul, to stretch out a warning and helping hand. Thus, the effect of this dream upon me was to make me pray earnestly to God, that He would yet bring us together, and permit me to be useful to you. I longed that you should share the happiness which I possess, and which I know the world can never, never give.'

'Then it is your religion that has changed you, and made you so happy,' said Caroline, musingly and seriously. 'How, tell me, for so many whom I have heard speak of religion, have associated with it all that is gloomy and unattractive ; but if all religious people were like you and Mr and Mrs Meredith, I wish I were one of them.'

'If peace with God, through a Saviour who has so loved us as to die to procure us this blessing, and an aim for life which redeems the most trivial duty from insignificance, besides all the unspeakable bliss, I had almost said, but at least rest and satisfaction in having One, even Jesus, to whom we can repair in every emergency and trial ; —if such are elements of gloom and moroseness, then those who attach such to vital religion have

ground for the allegation. But how different is the case, dear Carry. I can hardly tell you the aching void I had for many long months and days ; nor the sickening dissatisfaction with which I turned from every vain amusement, feeling that none could satisfy me. They afforded a passing excitement, indeed, but I panted for something more permanent, and blest, and true.'

'And what led you to seek it in religion?'

'Many circumstances combined led me to seek it in Jesus, for it is none else but Himself who can give it. I mean no cold abstract doctrine, around which the heart could never twine. I felt, as one has truly and strikingly remarked, that my soul was too big for all the world ; that although it had all things below God, but not God, it had nothing. Then, too, as you know, I had a living and bright example beside me of the reality of Christianity, and of its power to sustain the spirit in lingering sickness, and prepare it for meeting death.'

'Oh yes, dear Kate,' said Caroline, with emotion ; 'what a trial it was to lose her, but how ready she was to die.'

'She was, indeed, more than a conqueror through Him who loved her ; and her life and death have been blessed to not a few—myself among the number. I had been impressed seriously long before her last illness, but then the decision through God's grace came ; and it was

no small joy to her, who had watched and prayed over me so long, to have the knowledge, ere she left us, that her prayers on my behalf were answered.'

'Had she no fear in death?'

'None; the sting was taken away, and she rested in childlike trust upon Jesus her Saviour.'

'How wonderful!' said Caroline; 'and have you no fear of death, Rose? The very thought of it has often fallen over my spirit with an icy chill, causing my heart to shiver and faint.'

'I cannot say that I have no fear, for I am naturally timid, and shrink sensitively from entering into a state unknown and untried. But although such are very frequent feelings now, of this I am quite certain, that when the time comes for me to die, Jesus will be near to uphold and comfort me. We must not expect dying grace before the dying hour. I spoke to Kate on the subject, as she approached its gates, and she told me that such was her experience, that He was nigh, upholding her in His very arms of love, and gently carrying her over the waves of Jordan. How she urged me to trust Christ for all, and to come out from the dreary chambers of unbelief, and lie down before the rays of the Sun of Righteousness!'

'You surprise me with all you say,' remarked Caroline, 'and I don't quite understand everything about it; but here are Freddy and George with their fishing-rods, so I suppose our private talk for the present is over.' A shout of merri-

ment from the younger of Rose's two brothers, as he drew a trout, wriggling from the stream, and called upon the 'young ladies,' as he laughingly termed them, to come and help him with his prize,—drew Caroline and Rose towards them ; and being soon afterwards joined by others of the children, their conversation was not again resumed.

Caroline impatiently longed for another 'serious talk,' as she called it, with Rose ; and as soon as opportunity offered for them being again alone, she eagerly reverted to the subject, which was so full of interest to her mind.

'Rose,' she began, 'I have been thinking over what you said about death, and dear Kate's peaceful departure ; but I want you very much to explain, not only what imparted such tranquil joy *then*, but also what gives true happiness to the *life*,—your life, for example ; for it seems to me, that much as is the life, so is the death of a person,—I mean that those whose life is spent aright, generally have peace and comfort in their last hours. I don't want a mere motive or imagination that will stimulate and carry me on in the given direction for a short time, after which, the excitement and novelty being gone, I might relapse into my former condition ; but I long for some powerful *heart-aim* that will keep me steady in the right way. What is the secret of your life ? What is your constant guiding-star, which leads

you safe, and which you seem confident, will shine over your head even in death ?'

'My answer to so momentous a question, and yet one which it is simply rational for every human being to put, is Christ—simple faith in Him and His promises—an individual interest in the Lord Jesus. Listen to these words of a favourite hymn of mine.' She repeated the following beautiful verses :—

'When, marshall'd on the nightly plain,
The glittering host bestud the sky,
One star alone, of all the train,
Can fix the *sinner's* wandering eye.

'Hark ! hark ! to God the chorus breaks
From every host, from every gem ;
But one alone the Saviour speaks—
It is the star of Bethlehem.

'Once on the raging seas I rode—
The storm was loud, the night was dark,
The ocean yawn'd, and rudely blow'd
The wind, that toss'd my foundering bark.

'Deep horror then my vitals froze ;
Death-struck, I ceased the tide to stem,
When suddenly a star arose—
It was the star of Bethlehem.

'It was my guide, my life, my all,
It bade my dark forebodings cease :
And, through the storm and danger's thrall,
It led me to the port of peace.

'Now, safely moor'd, my perils o'er,
I'll sing first in night's diadem,
For ever and for evermore,
The star, the star of Bethlehem.'

'These lines describe my case,' said Rose, as she finished repeating them. 'Once it was so with me. I was tossed about from one wave of mental trouble to another, having, like you, fears of death so dreadful, that they fell as a dark shadow across every enjoyment ; besides which, I was truly dissatisfied and disappointed with everything the world could give, and turned sickened and sad away.'

'And you found satisfaction and rest in —'

'In Jesus, as my all-sufficient and most compassionate Saviour. He is my guiding star in life, and it is He alone who will disarm me of my fears, when the solemn hour of death shall come. In God's word we have a promise for every emergency, for every stage of life ; and it is perfectly wonderful, when one searches into its treasures, to find how minute and specific these promises are, and how adapted for each and every case. Here are one or two to illustrate what I mean: "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy steps." Again, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Such is a mere specimen, from the rich, exhaustless mine of revealed truth, of God's guidance of His people in life. Again, "I will never leave thee, nor

forsake thee." "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me into glory." Such reach beyond life, even across the dark river of death, and onward to the unseen eternity.'

'These are very sweet words,' said Caroline, 'but they are not applicable to all—only to the good, and —'

'To each and all,' interrupted Rose earnestly, 'who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who, casting themselves at His feet, surrender themselves to Him, and implore Him to fulfil His own promise in their behalf, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." Such a step cannot fail, as you must see, to give a new aim, a new motive, for life.'

'How?—What?' asked Caroline.

'Because the same believing look at that bleeding cross where Jesus died, not only unlocks a stream of salvation to the penitent sinner at its foot, speaking love, pardon, and peace; but it tells also how hateful sin is in God's sight, and how polluting, that nothing but the blood of Jesus could pay its immense debt, or make the guilty rebel clean in the pure eye of God. Thus the renewed sinner longs and pants after holiness,—after conformity to the mind and will of that God, who so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son to die for it, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

‘But how difficult it must be to be holy,’ said Caroline. ‘I know that love is the most powerful motive to constrain, but do you never feel as if you had not power to do even what you wish?’

‘Oh, yes! indeed I do, if I trust to myself and my feelings alone; but such is not the Christian’s armour. Christ gives His Spirit to dwell in the ransomed soul, nay, his very body is the temple of the Holy Ghost; and with such an omnipotent Friend he can exclaim, “Greater is He that is in me, than all they that can be against me.” The gift of the Spirit is free and full. It is, indeed, the promise of the New Testament, while the Messiah is that of the Old. “Likewise also the Spirit helpeth our infirmities.” “He maketh intercession within us, with groanings that cannot be uttered.” You see how complete is the preparation of God, both for the salvation and sanctification of the weakest believer—for him who, coming to Jesus, passes from death to life, and is introduced into the glorious liberty of the children of God.’

‘But what is it that makes religion so gloomy then?’ asked Caroline; ‘for all that you describe must be so good, so different from living in constant dread of an offended God.’

‘There is nothing in real religion to constitute gloom. On the contrary, the Gospel message is “glad tidings of great joy;” but many persons make it so, from either having a mere profession

of Christianity, or having only a little real religion, but not enough. In the former case, the heart is unchanged, while there is an attempt to impose by the life; in the latter there is enough of religion to make one miserable, not enough to give peace,—enough to put a check upon the unrestrained indulgence of sin, not enough to enable the soul to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.'

'But there is, at any rate, a great deal of unnecessary strictness and scrupulosity about some serious people. Now, what possible harm could it do you, Rose, to mix in a little more society, and see your friends?'

'You speak of me as if I were a positive recluse,' said Rose, smiling; 'I am not such, although I *could not* enter into the avowedly frivolous amusements of the world. Besides the sin of them, they would be positively distasteful to me. The friendship of the world is enmity against God; and, believe me, dearest Caroline, the heart that has the love of Christ reigning in it will have no place for the empty pleasures that once charmed it. And yet, in what a mistaken light is this subject often viewed! An anxious soul often speaks thus with himself: These gay amusements and scenes, in which I have so freely mingled, must be all foregone, all given up, if I become a Christian. I must cease from this, and no longer

indulge in that. The renunciation of them is part payment of my very salvation—the price I must carry in my hand when I go to Jesus. The thought is then painful; it makes him hang back and hesitate, and in many cases he resolves and re-resolves, and—dies the same.

‘But the case is far otherwise. The sinner is invited to come to a gracious Saviour, “without money and without price.” He *can* take nothing. He *must* take nothing. He must cast himself unreservedly upon the all-sufficiency of that Redeemer, who has paid the uttermost farthing of his death-dooming debt, and who, as the poor sinner falls down wearily at His sacred feet, welcomes him to His heart of love, and whispers in his ear, “In *Me* ye shall have life;” “I have redeemed you with My own life’s blood.” The thought of the abandonment of the world’s vanities, which was before to him a painful one, is now a matter of voluntary, hearty choice. How can he who has tasted the sweetness of redeeming love live any longer in the friendship and pursuit of that world which crucified the Lord of glory, and whose very element is enmity against God? The old withered leaves of the autumn tree give way to the bright fresh blossoms of a new spring. And, instead of putting the question, as at first he expected he should, May I do this, may I go thus far in approaching the margin of the world? he will find himself shrinking from

anything and everything that may possibly interpose a cloud between his soul and Christ.

‘In the heart which has been surrendered to God, He Himself reigns. He dwells with the humble and contrite soul; and having thus obtained the most fine gold, what wonder that the heart turns away from earth’s gilded shows? The language it utters now is,

“In having all things and not Thee, what have I?

Not having Thee, what have my labours got?

Let me enjoy but Thee, what further crave I?

And having Thee alone, what have I not?

I wish not sea nor land; nor would I be

Possess’d of heav’n, heav’n unpossessed of Thee.”’

‘Then I suppose you class balls and dances among the world’s frivolities, and that was the reason why you did not come to mine?’

‘I do; and while I greatly enjoy rational and social intercourse with my friends, I look upon *these* entertainments as hostile to the highest and noblest interests of man.’

‘Then you think I lead a very wicked life,’ said Caroline.

‘A life that makes you forget God in its own absorbing worldliness, in whatever direction it draws you, must be; and there is nothing, I believe, so deadening to serious thought, as living in a whirl of gay dissipation.’

‘Well, I never wish to go to another ball,’ ex-

claimed Caroline ; ‘ they are cold, artificial things, and very different from what I at one time expected to find them. I would say it to none but yourself, Rose, but even when people have thought me gay and happy, I have felt sad and dissatisfied enough.’

‘ I am sure of it, for it is not in the nature of such things to satisfy a soul whose aspirations reach to God Himself. And oh ! the thought, too, of wasting in sinful indulgence the precious hours of our one life,—it is overwhelming !

“ Not many lives have we, but one,
Frail, fleeting man ;
How precious should that one life ever be,
That narrow span.
Day unto day filled up with busy toil ;
Night unto night still bringing in new spoil.”

Oh, yes ! this is the secret of a happy life—union to Christ, and an unreserved dedication of oneself to His blessed service : “ Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

‘ Yes,’ said Caroline, ‘ and how much more true are the acts of Christian friendship ; one can always depend so on a Christian. I want to be like you, Rose,’ she added earnestly ; ‘ you are the most truly happy one I ever met with, and the best.’

Rose directed her anew simply to Christ, as not only a willing Saviour, but one who, by His

Spirit, would guide her into all truth, and teach her the way she should go. Very grateful was she for these deep impressions produced upon the heart and mind of her friend; yet she longed to know that the decisive step was taken by Caroline, and that, no longer halting between two opinions, she was by God's grace sitting at the feet of Christ, and being taught of Him, who is the way to the Father's heart and the Father's home in heaven. Of this gracious change, however, she had no evidence; and when Caroline left the Castle, which she did at the expiry of a much shorter time than she had anticipated—for the caprice of Lady Hume, which had prompted her to consent to her daughter's visit, was not long of suffering re-action—Rose had but the satisfaction of hearing her repeated declarations that she would not again enter the vortex of worldly society, together with a reiterated expression of longing to share in the peace and tranquil joy which pervaded the heart of her beloved friend.

CHAPTER IV.

'Haste, traveller, haste—the night comes on,
And many a shining hour is gone;
The storm is gathering in the west,
And thou art far from home and rest—
Haste, traveller, haste.

'Oh! far from home thy footsteps stray—
Christ is the Life, and Christ the Way,
And Christ the Light—yon setting sun
Sinks ere the moon is scarce begun—
Haste, traveller, haste.

* * * * *

'O yes, a shelter you may gain,
A covert from the wind and rain;
A hiding-place, a rest, a home,
A refuge from the wrath to come—
Haste, traveller, haste.

'Then linger not in all the plain,
Flee for thy life, the mountain gain;
Look not behind, make no delay,
O speed thee, speed thee on thy way.
Haste, traveller, haste.

THE first invitation which Caroline received to a ball, after her return home, she unhesitatingly refused; and it was after she had steadily declined to join, as before, in such visiting, that her mother demanded an explanation of her extraordinary

conduct, and heard with bewilderment and indignation, which she could not conceal, the characteristically frank and simple reply of her daughter.

‘Mamma, I may die this year, and oh! if I should be taken away now, what would become of me? I cannot go to balls, I am not ready to die.’

‘Child,’ exclaimed Lady Hume, angrily, ‘we must all die, but why should you fill your young mind with such dismal thoughts? You are young and healthy, and,’ she added in a gentler tone, ‘I never saw you look fairer, Caroline.’

‘Kate Meredith was as young,’ replied Caroline, ‘when she died, and she had no gloomy thoughts about death. Rose has told me how happy and peaceful she was—’

‘Oh,’ interrupted her mother, ‘I see how it is; Miss Meredith has been infecting you with her religion, and putting all sorts of fanatical notions into your mind. Now, mark me, Caroline, you shall never visit there again. Blind and infatuated that I was, to have permitted you to go!’ she added bitterly. ‘But the girl has such winning ways, that I was quite deceived.’

‘How, and in what?’ asked Caroline warmly, as she heard her friend’s character thus impeached.

‘In the trust I committed to her, by allowing you to visit at Castle Meredith. She must have known, without me telling her, how distasteful it

would be to me to have you becoming religious ; in short—'

'But,' interrupted Caroline, her ingenuous face flushing with emotion, as she attempted to gain her mother's ear, 'I asked her—there was no breach—no—'

'Let me hear no more on the subject,' said her Ladyship resolutely, 'and I forbid you, on the pain of my severest displeasure, to see or hear from Miss Meredith, or to hold any communication *whatever* with her.'

So saying, she swept out of her daughter's apartment, leaving her oppressed with feelings of the saddest kind.

Truthful, and possessing much affection and respect for her mother, there was no possibility of the stringent command being infringed by Caroline Hume; and, together with her own heart's grief, there was the added pain that her friend could not learn from herself the true cause of separation. Lady Hume informed her that she had written on the subject to Mrs Meredith, and Caroline knew too well what the strain of her communication would be.

The effect of her now serious concern about her soul, her entire seclusion from the society of the only one who could help her and sympathize with her in her anxiety, and the ceaseless reproaches of her mother, who was greatly mortified by her determined conduct,—the effect of these

conjoint depressions was a visible and painful change in the health and spirits of Caroline.

Our readers may wonder at the treatment of Lady Hume to the child whom she truly loved, and whose pleasure it had always been to gratify instead of to thwart her wishes. But, besides possessing an ambitious and worldly spirit, she had a will so strong and resolute, that its opposition, even by those she loved, called forth its indomitable energy ; and Caroline's spirit, though high, was accustomed to yield to it. In the present instance, however, while she sorrowfully submitted to the separation from her friend, she felt the concerns of her soul to be so supremely transcendent above all other considerations, that she decidedly, but respectfully, declared her determination to abstain from the gay society in which she had hitherto mixed. All attempts on the part of her parents having failed to shake her resolution, it was arranged that a short tour should be made on the Continent, Lady Hume secretly indulging the hope that the entire change of scene and association might drive all gloomy thoughts from Caroline's mind. But the new hope and experiment entirely failed ; and, Lady Hume becoming seriously alarmed at the increasing languor and debility of her daughter, the party hastily returned home, that they might be near their own medical adviser, who knew her constitution so well. Dr Gresham, in answer to

her parents' solicitous inquiries, assured them there was no cause for alarm, there being no chronic disease; but added that her nervous system required bracing, and recommended open air exercise, particularly during the early morning hours, when the air was fresh and cool.

It was on the occasion of one of these morning drives, that we first introduced the reader to Lady Hume and her daughter; and having in the preceding pages made him acquainted with the peculiar circumstances of Caroline's position, we now pass on, without further retrospect, to resume our narrative on the morning of the drive before referred to in our opening chapter.

CHAPTER V.

‘Nothing but leaves! the spirit grieves
Over a wasted life;
Sin committed, while conscience slept,
Promises made, but never kept,
Hatred, battle, and strife—
Nothing but leaves!

‘Nothing but leaves! no garner’d sheaves
Of life’s fair ripened grain;
Words, idle words, for earnest deeds,
We sow our seeds, lo! tares and weeds
We reap with toil and pain—
Nothing but leaves!

Nothing but leaves! memory weaves
No veil to screen the past;
As we trace our weary way,
Counting each lost and mis-spent day,
We find, alas, at last,
Nothing but leaves!

‘And shall we meet the Master so,
Bearing our wither’d leaves?
The Saviour looks for perfect fruit,—
We stand before Him, humble, mute,
Waiting the word He breathes,
Nothing but leaves!’

‘Do you feel better this morning, Miss Hume?’
inquired Miss Brunelle, a *ci-devant* governess of
Caroline’s, whom Lady Hume had invited, during
part of her vacation, to visit at the Hall, hoping

that her vivacity, and her interesting details of the passing events in the fashionable world, might rouse Caroline's interest ; 'if one may judge from *looks*, I should say you do.'

'Yes, thank you,' replied Caroline somewhat impatiently, 'I do, and I am so glad to be home again.'

'How strange that you should have tired of visiting all these enchanting spots on the Continent. I am sure I should not, and I rejoice in the prospect of paying some of my pet spas a visit this summer. I dote on spas.'

'An odd taste certainly,' said Caroline. 'Is it their peculiar odour or flavour which charms you most ?'

'Ah ! now, Miss Caroline, how can you ?' answered Miss Brunelle, with a remarkable twinkle in her little grey eyes ; 'I don't mean literally that I love the taste of the waters, but the air, and fashion, and company, and happiness, in short. Has your Ladyship ever visited Scarborough ?' she added, addressing Lady Hume, 'it, now, is a wonderfully gay place ; and if one wishes the enjoyment of a spa nearer home than by going abroad, I recommend them to go to Scarborough. We were there last summer, and enjoyed it greatly. It was so crowded, we could hardly get the most ordinary accommodation, and so hot, that sometimes we could scarcely move, even in the house, till the evening.'

‘Strange happiness!’ thought Caroline.

‘I wish you could have witnessed the scene from our drawing-room windows in the hotel. Being on the way to the beach and colonnade, which are the chief objects of attraction to the visitors, we had splendid opportunities for watching the on-goings.’

‘Tell us how you spent your time,’ said Lady Hume.

‘In the morning, hundreds flock to the shore for the purpose of bathing, and, literally, the small bit of beach which is available, is cut into ridges by the machines, which are in constant exercise from six till ten o’clock. Have you ever been bathed by these semi-amphibious old creatures, the bathing women, Miss Hume?’

‘Oh yes, at Brighton, many times.’

‘Well, is it not curious to feel yourself in their grasp, popping you underneath the waves, as they roll on? I thought it very funny at first, but it is quite necessary on such coasts.

‘Then we walked a little, and had breakfast; after which, my pupils, Miss Augusta and Miss Edith, and I, retired and read for an hour or two. Being holiday time, however, we were not particular as to what we read, and generally picked up an exciting play or novel in our walks.’

‘Then you drove, I presume, after study in the forenoon,’ remarked Lady Hume.

‘Not often till the evening, but frequently

the young ladies and Mr Digby rode out in the early part of the day. There were many pleasant shady roads, and, being acquainted with several families in the neighbourhood, they made riding excursions. There was quite a romance, too, during our Scarborough visit. It was there Miss Augusta first met Sir John Crow.'

'Ah, indeed,' said Lady Hume, 'I fancied it was at Harrowgate.'

'O no,' replied Miss Brunelle, with another twinkle of the grey eyes, and an air of importance; 'it was all settled by that time. But we had a great deal of amusement about it at Scarborough; and in consenting to make Sir John Crow happy, Miss Augusta nearly drove other three admirers to despair. She could not resist flirting with them, although she never meant to take any, and very nearly got into a fine scrape. I was her *confidante* in the matter, and we *did* enjoy the fun.'

'But did you not tell Augusta how wrong she was in such conduct?' asked Caroline.

'La, Miss Hume, you have got sadly prim and puritanic too. Methinks you are a strange contrast to your friends, Augusta and Edith Toinby; they think nothing of such pranks.'

'But *you* should,' said Caroline with warmth.

'Me! ah, I will not quarrel with my bread and butter, believe me,' said Miss Brunelle. 'My life's aim is not to throw myself out of a good

home, when I have it ; but to keep it, and to extract as much happiness as possible, no matter how.'

'What an aim !' mused Caroline within herself ; 'how wretched and ignoble !' And then, almost unconsciously, she murmured the lines Rose had once quoted, and which are so full of meaning,—

'Tis not the whole of life to live,
Nor yet of death, to die.'

'I declare we shall have Miss Hume a Methodist directly,' said Miss Brunelle, 'if she is not one already. No wonder she is so grave and melancholy,' she added, turning to Lady Hume.

'No wonder,' said that lady bitterly.

'Mamma, Miss Brunelle, it is not Methodism, as you call it, that makes me sad ; it is because I may not be religious,—may not do as my heart tells me I should, without being reproached, and having those I love look coldly upon me.' She would have proceeded, but her feelings overpowered her, and she leant back, languid and exhausted. The tones of Miss Brunelle's voice, whom she now more than ever disliked, fell upon her inattentive ear, and her thoughts flew to other subjects. Miss Brunelle talked on, recapitulating what she termed 'lights and shadows' of Scarborough and Harrowgate life ; and if she failed to find in the listless Caroline an interested auditor,

she had at least the satisfaction of knowing that she entertained Lady Hume by her recital.

Having proceeded several miles, the coachman slackened his horses' pace, to inquire what direction he should take, as they were now at a point where four roads met. Lady Hume looked to Caroline, who, being thus appealed to, immediately replied, 'To the right.' It was the road leading to Castle Meredith, and Caroline's chief object of interest since the commencement of these constitutional drives, consisted in the hope of meeting Rose, whom she had not once seen since the happy visit she had paid at Castle Meredith, now several months ago. They proceeded in the chosen direction, when, suddenly, Caroline perceived, at some distance, figures on horseback. Could Rose be one of them? As they came nearer, her heart bounded with a joy to which it had been a stranger all these dreary months, as she at last recognised the form of her loved friend.

'Mamma,' she involuntarily exclaimed, forgetting everything in the joy of the moment, 'mamma, it is Rose, my own darling Rose!'

Lady Hume was surprised at the temporarily restored energy of her once enthusiastic daughter, but answered quietly and coldly, 'You forget that we do not meet now.'

Instantly the momentary flush flew from Caroline's cheek, and left her paler than before.

Bruce looked back as the riders advanced, and asked if her Ladyship chose to stop.

‘Drive on,’ she replied, ‘drive on.’

No word or remonstrance fell from her daughter’s pallid lips ; but again the deep glow of emotion overspread her beautiful face, as her friend appeared before her for a moment. Their eyes met ; love, deep, unutterable love, was mutually exchanged in the one brief glance ; and she was gone. Her father, who accompanied her, waited for but the smallest encouragement to pause, and allow his daughter and Caroline to meet ; but the command so peremptorily given by the proud lady precluded its possibility. After they had passed, Caroline sunk back in the carriage ; a sort of despairing feeling, that all intercourse with Rose was now for ever at an end, came over her heart, and a chilly stupor seemed to steal over her spirit. No tears flowed ; they seemed dried up, or frozen in their channel, and no word of sorrow was uttered. Hers was a drear and solitary grief, and she sought not sympathy from those who could not give it. For many long days she had lived on the hope of meeting Rose ; to her she looked to give her help and comfort in her now real concern about her soul, and the difficulties which beset her path. Now that hope was blighted, and its very spring dried up.

The reader has seen enough of Caroline Hume’s

character, in the foregoing pages, to understand something of her warmth of temperament, and deeply affectionate disposition. Her attachment to Rose Meredith, her early playmate and friend, grew with her years, and strengthened as time rolled on. The not unfrequent interruptions which, as we have observed, took place in their intercourse, as very young girls, served rather to deepen the roots of their mutual attachment, and to enhance the joy with which they hailed each re-union. Had Caroline been less true, and less ardent in her love, it might have been blunted by their long separation on her return from school, and the influence of the cold, selfish atmosphere by which, on her introduction into gay society, she was almost constantly surrounded. Then, too, the tidings of the change which had come over her friend, her absence from fashionable parties and balls, and her absurd seclusion and righteous over-much deportment, were held up before Caroline's mind, amid such colouring and exaggeration, as were well fitted to excite prejudice. But bright and clear above all such aspersion rose to her mind's eye the happy home-circle at Meredith Castle, the reality of life, the beautifully consistent character of Mr and Mrs Meredith, and their daughter Kate, whom she had so loved and respected; and she put from her everything that would tarnish this her *beau idéal* of a blest happy home. She felt that if Rose had added

to her naturally amiable and loving character the beauty of holiness, which had so adorned her sister, she must be more attractive, and more truly lovely than before. All this time, as the reader must have discovered, Caroline knew nothing of the real spring of the lives of those her friends; but certainly the thought of them and their tranquil joy, disarmed of all its barbed poison, the arrow that would fain have been fastened in her heart, to poison it against Christianity. As has been already seen, her visit to Meredith Castle served to increase and intensify her love for her friend, and to convince her that real religion makes not only the happiest, but the best member of society. She watched Rose in the bosom of her family, where what the person really is that he shows himself to be, and failed not to notice her self-denial, her devotion to her parents and younger brothers and sisters, and the cheerful heartiness with which she threw herself into every duty, as well as into every innocent recreation; and the result upon her own mind was an intense longing to resemble Rose, which led to the conversations already recorded. Was it, then, to be wondered at, that one thus impressed, and now deeply concerned about her soul, should turn with disgust from the worldly talk of Miss Brunelle, and others like-minded, and pine for the society of her who could strengthen and help her? The severest domestic trial, however, which Caroline

had now to endure, was the coldness and change on the part of her parents. To both of them she was tenderly attached, but her father she loved with passionate affection ; and it nearly broke her young heart to witness his alienation from her, who had once been his idol and pride, and round whom every mark of his affection twined and centred. In justice to Sir Richard, it must be told, that it cost him many and bitter struggles to keep up the part he was now called on to play towards his child. Lady Hume assured him that if he would not have Caroline become a ‘canting, melancholy Methodist, he must now, once for all, take up a determined position in regard to it ;’ and she added, ‘she did not doubt that they should succeed in delivering or driving the infatuated girl from her strange delusion.’ Such was the position of affairs at Ashley Hall, when, one evening, soon after the morning drive alluded to, Lady Hume entered her daughter’s apartment. She sat down ; and, with words more gentle and affectionate than had for many days fallen from her mother’s lips on Caroline’s ear, spoke to her of the grief her conduct occasioned both to her and her father,—of the pride and pleasure it had given them both to see her the admired and loved of all, and of the joy that would again visit their home, if she would but abandon her self-imposed seclusion, and again join the gay circle.

'But, mamma,' said Caroline, 'I should not be happy if I did. I thought, before I began going into society, that it would give me pleasure and satisfaction; but, indeed, indeed, it did not, and now I feel I might do myself a great deal of harm by going. Oh!' she added in a tone almost of anguish, 'if you and papa, dear, dear papa, would only allow me to spend the evenings with you, and love me and let me love you as much as before, how happy I should be! Then, too,' she added, her animation growing as she found her mother listened, 'I might go into the society of those where I should get no harm, and which, I know, I should enjoy; but these artificial scenes,—oh! do not ask me to go to them; they do me harm, they would ruin me, I am sure,' and she burst into a flood of tears.

Lady Hume paused for a moment ere Caroline composed herself, and then renewed her entreaties, as if the touching appeal of her daughter had not been listened to. She told her that she had come with messages of love from her father; spoke of the joy of being restored to his favour as well as her own, and finally assured her that now she had an opportunity of proving the reality of her love to them, and showing that she cared for their happiness, by consenting to go to one more ball, to be given by Lady Violet Grey.

'One more ball, only one,' re-echoed through Caroline's mind. Well, she thought, she could

scarcely be much affected one way or another. Then, too, came the glad thought of being restored to the affectionate embrace of her parents and friends, together with the memory of all the misery she had suffered from their opposition ; and, as she mused, her resolution began to waver. ‘One more ball, only one,’ was wafted again through Caroline’s mind, as if breathed there by some angel’s voice. ‘One more’ sinful pleasure voluntarily indulged in by an awakened sinner—only one—has ruined souls—has blighted heaven’s fairest blossoms. The conflict was severe. Ah ! had she then laid hold of the strength of Him with whom ‘all things are possible,’ she had been ‘more than conqueror.’ She was silent, but her thoughts were busy.

Lady Hume saw her advantage, and said, ‘I have brought you this ornament from your father and myself, which, should you consent to make us happy by accompanying us to Lady Violet’s, we offer you as a token of reconciliation and love.’ So saying, she lifted from a casket, which she held in her hand, a superb diamond wreath, and gracefully placed it among the dark tresses of her daughter’s hair.

‘How beautiful, how exquisitely light and chaste!’ exclaimed Caroline. The bait did its work,—it was an ornament which, in former days, she had coveted to possess, and, as she admiringly gazed on the glittering diadem, she, with

a beating heart, gave her consent to attend Lady Violet's ball.

In triumph Lady Hume repaired to her husband, and informed him that all was as it should be, assuming to herself no small credit for the skill with which she had managed the delicate affair, and indulging the secret persuasion that Caroline's return to the world on this special occasion would be but a prelude to her continuance within its scenes.

The evening of the ball arrived. With trembling and anxious thoughts, the lovely girl suffered herself to be attired; and great was Ainslie's astonishment at her indifference to her own charms. Ere the finishing touches were put to her toilette, her heart began to fail, and a torrent of perplexing thoughts and convictions swept over her mind. At that moment Lady Hume entered the room, and, approaching her daughter, adjusted the glittering wreath on her classically formed head. Again the diadem did its work. Glancing in the mirror opposite which she stood, her eye caught the reflection of its bright lustre, and again she yielded. Caroline went to the ball, and there were those there who welcomed her re-appearance in their midst with protestations of pleasure. At first they fell with a hollow sound upon her ear, but soon the effect changed. She listened with self-complacency to the words of adulation addressed to her; and the bright glance of her

father's eye, as it never left her, but dwelt with a gratified expression upon his lovely child, helped to tighten the cords which were beginning again to bind her heart to earth. A change came over the spirit of her thoughts ; and she who had entered the room anxious and fearful, and anticipating with desire the close of the entertainment, now felt herself, as the evening passed on, entering more and more heartily into the gay scene. Conscience began to speak less forcibly, and she felt its quickenings less and less. The unseen angels saw the gentle, dove-like wings of the grieved Spirit preparing to flee from her. Yet conscience still spoke out, and one more warning, but one, was to be given. Towards the close of the evening, as Caroline moved through the dance, she passed for a moment near some ladies seated as spectators. She heard her own name mentioned in terms of admiration, and presently the shrill voice of Miss Brunelle greeted her ear with the words, 'Glad to see you, *at last*, enjoying life, Miss Hume.'

'Tis not the whole of life to live,
Nor yet of death, to die,'

came to Caroline's mind, as if breathed there by some seraph voice. 'Death,' she mused, 'oh, horrible ! This is no place or time to think of such terrors ; I will not think of death just now.' 'Well, but life,' the voice seemed again to say,

'is this life? Is this the atmosphere meet for an immortal soul? Why are *you* here, where everything is driving not only serious but rational and true thoughts from your mind, and chilling the holy aspirations which but so lately filled your soul? Stop, poor sinner! stop, and think!' 'No, no, no, drown thought, drown it, drown it!' Caroline mentally exclaimed; and, making a determined and desperate effort, she drove the subject from her mind,—yes, expelled it with a strong and conscious resolution. She stifled her convictions. The Spirit was grieved, and fled. Caroline quitted the fatal scene, with every trace of serious thought—*gone*. And now it needed no persuasive eloquence on the part of Lady Hume to induce her to accept a second invitation to a similar entertainment, and great were the hopes that were centred upon it. The ambitious views of Lady Hume seemed already beginning to be realized in the undisguised admiration manifested on the part of the Earl of S—— for Caroline. The approaching festivity was to be given by his mother, in honour of Miss Hume. A slight cold which she caught at Lady Violet Grey's detained Caroline to her room for several days afterwards. It increased, and became accompanied by sore throat; this, however, she attempted to conceal. On the morning of the eventful day she felt feverish and ill, but carefully abstained from mentioning her sensations.

‘Why, Caroline,’ said Miss Trever, a young acquaintance, who, with her sister, called in the forenoon to inquire for her, ‘you are not well ; you should not think of leaving your room to-day, far less of going to a ball.’

‘Oh, nonsense,’ replied the changed girl, ‘I shall be greatly the better of it. It is just moping in here these last few days, that has made me nervous and ill.’

‘But you are flushed and feverish,’ continued Miss Trever.

‘Oh, I am interested reading this entertaining novel. I have not read any for some time ; but now I feel that I need such light reading sometimes ; one’s mind craves for it after excitement. Indeed, I cannot concentrate my mind on anything more profound. Do you not feel your mind somewhat similar, Isabella?’ asked Caroline.

‘Oh, it is long since I gave up serious or grave reading, such as History, Travels, etc., etc. ; for, besides having no relish for such study, I positively have no time. Late hours at night don’t make early ones in the morning, you know, and Gertrude and I are shockingly lazy.’

‘When do you breakfast?’ asked Caroline.

‘Rarely before eleven, but you know we get frightful scoldings about it from papa ; however, I must say, mamma is very good-natured about it ; and although she considers it her duty to give

us a little set lecture every day, the oration falls perfectly innocuous upon her listener's ears.

'But you are not always so late?' inquired Caroline.

'Oh, always; for when it is not the season here, we are either in London or Edinburgh, so that we are constantly out.'

'And then,' remarked Gertrude Trever, 'one must have a ride or walk in the forenoon, to freshen one up for the evening, and give a little colour to one's cheeks. Then comes dinner; and by the time one has had a siesta, to make up for lost sleep, it is nearly time to dress for the evening. The only time I ever have leisure to read a novel, or nice book, is when my maid is dressing my hair.'

'I sometimes think it is an odd sort of life to live,' said Isabella, 'and yet I suppose it is just what most girls in our rank lead.'

'Well, it is surely best to enjoy life as long as possible, before one gets wrinkled and ugly,' said Gertrude; 'but I must confess it is rather ruinous to one's looks.' 'By the way, Caroline,' said Isabella, 'what a remarkably fresh, pretty-looking girl your friend Rose Meredith is. I was quite struck with her appearance yesterday when we met her and her brother Edward at the Bazaar. What kalydor does she use, do you know? for I have not seen any one so blooming for very long. She would create quite a sensation in Edinburgh,

I am sure ; but she does not visit, does she ? At least some one told me so ; for we have been so long from home at present, that I have not, of course, met her anywhere.'

'Oh, she does visit some places,' said Gertrude, 'for you remember mamma wrote us she had met the Meredith family at Colonel Macleod's, at dinner, the week before we came home, and she was so delighted with Rose, and her music, and sweet singing.'

'O yes, I do recollect,' said Isabella. 'Well, there is something uncommonly pleasing about her appearance altogether.'

'Did you speak to her ?' inquired Caroline, the feverish flush on whose face gave place to an alarming paleness.

'Merely bowed,' replied Miss Trever ; 'we had so many friends in the room, that it was impossible to speak to all.'

'Caroline, will you show us your diamond wreath, of which we have heard so much ?' asked Gertrude. 'I hear you are captivating all hearts with it. You were the unrivalled *belle* at Lady Violet's, we are told. We were so sorry we had not come home before it took place. And you are going to the Duchess of S——'s this evening ; you are, I assure you, the envy of every young lady in the county.'

'How superb, how exquisitely beautiful !' exclaimed Isabella and her sister, as Caroline, having

opened the jewel-case, lifted the glittering wreath and displayed it to view. 'I never saw anything so queen-like : why, its price must be fabulous.'

'Oh, I don't know what that may be,' said Caroline laughing, her heart rising with gratified vanity, 'I have nothing to do with that. It is curious how one's wishes are sometimes unexpectedly gratified. The only lady I ever saw wearing a similar ornament, was the young Countess of B——. When I was at school, I was invited to accompany a party who were going to see her dressed for a ball at the Palace, to which, after her marriage, she had a royal invitation. I cannot tell you how completely captivated I was with that young creature's appearance. Her image flitted across my mind for months afterwards, and I told mamma, when I came home, that I should never be satisfied till I got a diamond wreath. It had quite escaped my mind for many months, till mamma and papa the other day presented me with this.' Caroline said nothing of the terms of the gift,—indeed, she now cared not what these were.

'Have you heard anything more of the beautiful Countess ?' asked Isabella.

'Yes, I have heard that she is very unhappy, and her home wretched. Her marriage was one of policy, not affection, and her husband is an old surly crabtree, whose argus-like eyes are never off her, and whose doting pride on the one hand,

and jealous suspicion on the other, render her life completely miserable.'

'Poor young thing,' said Isabella Trever, 'one can only wish her in such circumstances a speedy riddance of such a horrid old fellow. Well, Caroline, you will have a better fate, I trust ; and, if report speaks true, you are on a fair road to be a countess yourself. Only think what a position ! Will you own your humble friends then, Caroline ?' said Miss Trever, with an affected laugh, 'or must we all make up our minds to be ignored henceforth ?'

'Don't be ridiculous,' was all Caroline's reply, from which her friends could gather nothing of what was passing in her mind.

'May we drive over and see you dressed to-night ?' asked Isabella.

'Oh, surely,' answered Caroline ; 'come over to dinner, and we shall have a nice chat while Ainslie is decorating me. I hope you are both to be at Colonel Bruce's on the 16th ; there are to be gay doings there—soiree *musicale*, *bal masque*, and everything charming.'

'Oh, yes,' replied the young ladies, 'and at Lady Hay's on the 20th, and Mrs Pringle's on the 31st. You must get quit of your cold immediately, Caroline, and be ready to fulfil all your engagements.'

'Oh, no fear,' replied Caroline ; 'I shall follow your plan of not getting up till the forenoon, and

take good care of myself during the day, to be well for the evening.'

'Ah, do, dear,' said her gay friends, as they rose to depart. 'We must go, as we promised to be home, to let mamma have the carriage to drive to Springfield before dinner.'

'So you really do admire my wreath,' said Caroline, as she laid the precious circlet in its casket.

'Oh, immensely! it is superb; but we shall judge of its effect much better when we see it on you this evening. *Addio, Carissima, au revoir, ce soir.*' So saying, they left the room.

'Well, how do you think the fair Caroline is looking?' said Miss Trever to her sister, as, lolling back in the carriage, they swept down the long avenue.

'One can't deny that she is as beautiful as ever,' said Gertrude with a jealous air and tone; 'but she is very selfish, so taken up with her balls, and conquests, and captivations.'

'Do you think so?' asked Miss Trever with surprise. 'I could not help thinking how quiet and modest she was about them.'

'Oh, I don't judge so much from what she actually said, but just from the *tout ensemble* of her appearance, and so forth.'

'There is no denying,' said Miss Trever, 'that she is proud, very proud, and you know "pride goeth before a fall." It would not surprise me if

going out this evening knocks her up for many weeks, and then we should have the ball at our feet. Did you observe how pale she got when I mentioned Miss Meredith's name. I did it on purpose, to watch the effect. There is no intimacy between them now, at least between the families. Lila Grahame told me it was on account of an attachment between Caroline and Edward Meredith ; that he had formally proposed for her, and Sir Richard had turned him to the door. The course of true love never did run smooth ; but I cannot persuade myself that Caroline Hume, with all her pride and pretensions, would ever look over her shoulder at a poor Indian officer, a second son too, when she has before her mind's eye the vision of an Earl prostrate at her feet.'

'I should think not,' retorted Gertrude.

'It is not human nature. I was so glad you proposed to go and see her dressed ; it will be something for us to tell that we saw the beauty dressed for the Dowager Countess' ball, with her crown on her head, and her sceptre—the magnificent fan the Earl gave her—in her hand.'

Such was the strain of conversation maintained by these so-called friends of Caroline Hume, and much more that was of a jealous and supercilious nature was added ere they reached their own home. Envious of the beauty and attractions of Caroline, and of the admiration she elicited, they, notwithstanding, judged it politic to be friendly

in appearance with one so popular in the fashionable world, while they thought it no sin to detract from her, in every way, when absent from her. Such is but too often proved to be the friendship of the world. Ah! is it not profoundly sad to think, that for this, this miserable hollow delusion, so many will put aside the love and faithfulness of the Saviour Jesus Christ, who offers them rest for souls He knows are weary enough; and who declares that He was manifested to destroy the works of Satan, the very god of this world; and that He died to redeem us from a present evil world. Ponder these truths, dear reader, and may the sorrowful but too true results which it remains for our concluding chapter to disclose, be blessed to your immortal soul.

CHAPTER VI.

LEFT BEHIND.

- ‘ Look at this starbeam ! from its place of birth,
It has come down to greet us here below ;
Now it alights unwearied on this earth,
Nor storm nor night have quenched its heavenly glow.
- ‘ Undimm’d it reaches me ; but yet alone
The thousand gay companions that took wing
Along with it, have perished one by one,
Scattered o’er space, like blossoms of the spring.
- ‘ Some to yon nearer orbs have sped their course,
Yon city’s smoke has quench’d a thousand more ;
Myriads in yon dark cloud have spent their force,
A few stray gleams are all that reach our shore.
- ‘ And so with us ! How many who began
Life’s race with us, are dropping by the way,
Losing themselves in darkness one by one,
From the glad goal departing wide astray.
- ‘ When we shall reach the kingdom of the blest,
How few who started with us shall we find
Arriving or arrived for glorious rest,
But many shall we mourn as left behind.’

Hymns of Faith and Hope.

PUNCTUAL to their engagement, and having succeeded in obtaining the carriage to convey them, the two Miss Trevers arrived at Ashley Hall in the evening.

Apparently enthusiastic in their admiration of their young friend, as she stood looking, indeed, a very queen of beauty in her own personal charms, and with all the embellishment which dress and ornament could superadd, their reiterated encomiums fell with a somewhat hollow sound on Caroline's ear. She felt them to be but

‘The sad echo
Of words unuttered by the heart.’

Yet she stayed not to analyse them ; such a faculty seemed now gone. Her delicate perception and keenly sensitive discrimination between the true and false, seemed blunted and blighted, and she even cared not to dwell on the subject. Alas ! for such disappointed hopes : who would not weep over the wreck of them ? Who does not shudder, as he sees the tempted one hurrying on to woe ? for,

‘What is the world ? A wildering maze,
Where sin hath track'd ten thousand ways,
Her victims to ensnare ;
All broad and winding, and aslope,
All tempting with perfidious hope,
All ending in despair.

‘Millions of pilgrims throng these roads,
Bearing their baubles, or their loads,
Down to eternal night ;
One only path that never bends,—
Narrow, and rough, and steep,—*ascends*
From darkness into light.’

Caroline went to the ball. As she rose to dance with the Earl, a strange feeling came over her ; her limbs tottered, and she felt feeble and ill.

‘I do not know what is the matter with me to-night,’ she said to her companion, ‘but you must really lead me through the dance ; I am quite deaf, I can’t hear the music.’

Greatly alarmed by the words and appearance of Caroline, the Earl immediately sought Lady Hume ; and she who, but a short time before, entered the room the envy and admiration of many a young heart, was borne insensible away. The delirium of fever was upon her, and all the way, as they drove home, she spoke wildly and incoherently. Arrived at the Hall, she was carried up to her room, where her gay dress was taken off, and the bright ornaments laid aside, and she was placed in bed,—that bed from which she never rose. Ah ! who shall tell the anguish that filled the minds of Sir Richard and Lady Hume, when, at the close of two days, the doctor informed them that nothing more could be done to save their child, and that she had only a few hours to live. All this time Caroline had been entirely unconscious ; no lucid moment had been granted her. On this day, however, as the doctor quitted her apartment, he had the welcome drop of consolation to mingle in the cup of intense bitterness, which he felt called on to put into the parents’ hands, of informing them that his

patient was now sensible, and that while from this symptom he augured no ultimate good, as she would ere long relapse into her former delirium, it was a precious interval of restored reason when they could have a last sad word, and look of recognition from their loved one. Having thus informed her parents of her present condition, Dr Gresham added, that, as she was now painfully agitated from the effects of her interview with him, he would wish them to wait for a few minutes, in the adjoining apartment, till she had somewhat recovered her composure. Accustomed as the faithful doctor was to stand by the dying couch, and to break, not unfrequently, the fact to the sufferer there, that he could do no more, it had been but rarely his lot to witness a scene so heartrending and solemn, as that on which he had just gazed. To the intensely solicitous inquiry of Caroline, on her restoration to consciousness, as to what he thought of her state, he had had no alternative but to break to her the awful reality, that she had only a few short hours to live. She clasped her hands in an agony of mind, and a flood of anguish rolled over her soul, as she uttered a wild cry, and exclaimed, 'Then I am lost! for ever lost!'

It was a lovely afternoon, and the partially closed blinds threw a soft shade over the room where the sufferer lay. What a change had come over the face and form of the once lovely Caroline

within a few brief days! Her clustering hair had been all removed to admit of strong applications to her burning head and temples, and her features and expression were painfully altered. After the doctor had quitted her apartment, Caroline remained silent, although tossing about in feverish restlessness. Suddenly looking up, she said, 'Ainslie, fetch me my wreath, the wreath I wore *that night, the first night*. Oh! that awful night!' she added, with agonized bitterness of tone, 'when I yielded, and turned and went.' The maid, hopeful that some favourable change had taken place on her dear young lady, hastened to obey.

'Now, ask papa and mamma to come to me.'

They hastened to Caroline, having only waited for the summons, yet not knowing how to meet their child, when all was known. As they entered, she exclaimed wildly, and in a tone of the deepest, bitterest anguish, 'Father, mother, I am dying, I am lost, for ever lost! Do you see *that*,' pointing to the glittering bauble, '*that! that!* that wreath is the price of my soul!'

No other coherent word fell from the lips of the dying girl. She relapsed into her sad delirium, out of which she never came. Who may tell the feelings of her mother's heart, as, sitting by the bedside of her daughter, she listened to the ramblings of her fevered brain. Much from these ramblings she gathered, enough and more,

to tell her of the state of her daughter's mind during the past months; enough to prove how deep had been her concern for her soul, and how great the struggle that had been waged in her bosom, to protect the opening bud of religious principle from the cold chilling winds that had struck so rudely against it, and had ultimately blighted and crushed its opening blossoms.

'Oh!' groaned the poor mother, as she bent over her suffering child, and vainly strove to cool her brow, and moisten the parched lip, 'Come back, come back to me, and you shall never more be forced to leave us, never more separated from Rose. Come back, my child; only open these eyes once more, and say you forgive and love me still.' But these eyes looked not again upon the weeping mother; and she called most for Rose, her own faithful, beloved Rose, to come and help her to tear off that cruel wreath, which was bearing and crushing her down. Rose was indeed sent for, and hastened to her friend with feelings of profoundest and most touching grief. Yet her voice even failed to rouse her to consciousness, and her tears fell fast on her who now knew her not. We pause not over a scene of such unmingled grief. The deepening shades gathered fast and long, and the last rays of that morning's sun fell upon the lifeless form of Caroline Hume. Oppressed and shocked, her young heart well-nigh broken with the scene, so awful, so profoundly

solemn, Rose was borne fainting from the room. Longer in the chamber of death we linger not—she, the beloved, beautiful one, is not now there; her spirit has fled,—she is in eternity. Hither in thought we dare not, may not follow her; but we mourn over her with feelings of no common grief, and our tears of sympathy would mingle with those of her sorrowing friend. Once she seemed on the very threshold of the narrow gate leading unto life; yet ere its porch was passed, and while still she halted and hesitated, the gilded arrow pierced her heart, and she voluntarily yielded to the tempter's wiles. Ah! thought of anguish, she turned her back upon Christ,—she rushed into the cold but alluring embrace of the world; she trifled with conviction; she perilled her soul's salvation for a perishing bauble. 'What shall it profit a man, if he should gain *the whole world*, and lose his own soul?' 'What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?'

